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30th Congress, 1st Session. [SENATE.] Executive, No. 47.

MESSAGE

OF THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN RELATION

To the Indian difficulties in Oregon.

March 29, 1848.

Read, referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States:

I lay before Congress the accompanying memorial and papers, which have been transmitted to me, by a special messenger employed for that purpose, by the governor and legislative assembly of Oregon territory, who constitute the temporary government which the inhabitants of that distant region of our country have, from the necessity of their condition, organized for themselves. The memorialists are citizens of the United States. They express ardent attachment to their native land, and in their present perilous and distressed situation they earnestly invoke the aid and protection of their government.

They represent that "the proud and powerful tribes of Indians," residing in their vicinity, have recently raised "the war whoop, and crimsoned their tomahawks in the blood of their citizens;" that they apprehend that "many of the powerful tribes, inhabiting the upper valley of the Columbia, have formed an alliance for the purpose of carrying on hostilities against their settlements;" that the number of the white population is far inferior to that of the savages; that they are deficient in arms and money, and fear that they do not possess strength to repel the "attack of so formidable a foe and protect their families and property from violence and rapine;" they conclude their appeal to the government of the United States for relief by declaring: "If it be at all the intention of our honored parent to spread her guardian wing over her sons and daughters in Oregon, she surely will not refuse to do it now, when they are struggling with all the ills of a weak and temporary government, and when perils are daily thickening around them, and preparing to burst upon their heads. When the ensuing summer's sun shall have dispelled the snow from the mountains, we shall look, with glowing hope and restless anxiety, for the coming of your laws and your arms."

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In my message of the 5th of August, 1846, communicating "a copy of the convention for the settlement and adjustment of the Oregon boundary," I recommended to Congress that "provision should be made by law, at the earliest practicable period, for the organization of a territorial government in Oregon." In my annual message of December, 1846, and again in December, 1847, this recommendation was repeated.

The population of Oregon is believed to exceed twelve thousand souls, and it is known that it will be increased by a large number of emigrants during the present season. The facts set forth in the accompanying memorial and papers show that the dangers to which our fellow citizens are exposed are so imminent, that I deem it to be my duty again to impress on Congress the strong claim which the inhabitants of that distant country have to the benefit of our laws, and to the protection of our government.

I, therefore, again invite the attention of Congress to the subject, and recommend that laws be promptly passed establishing a territorial government, and granting authority to raise an adequate volunteer force, for the defence and protection of its inhabitants. It is believed that a regiment of mounted men, with such additional force as may be raised in Oregon, will be sufficient to afford the required protection. It is recommended that the forces raised for this purpose should engage to serve for twelve months, unless sooner discharged. No doubt is entertained that, with proper inducements in land bounties, such a force can be raised in a short time. Upon the expiration of their service, many of them will doubtless desire to remain in the country and settle upon the land which they may receive as bounty. It is deemed important that provision be made for the appointment of a suitable number of Indian agents, to reside among the various tribes in Oregon, and that appropriations be made to enable them to treat with these tribes, with a view to restore and preserve peace between them and the white inhabitants.

Should the laws recommended be promptly passed, the measures for their execution may be completed during the present season, and before the severity of winter will interpose obstacles in crossing the Rocky mountains. If not promptly passed a delay of another year will be the consequence, and may prove destructive to the white settlements in Oregon.

JAMES K. POLK.

WASHINGTON, *May* 29, 1848.

OREGON CITY, *December* 29, 1847.

SIR: The bearer, Joseph L. Meek, esq., has been appointed by the legislature of Oregon territory a special messenger, to carry despatches to Washington city; his journey will be an arduous one,

and I would recommend him to the favorable notice of your excellency.

I have the honor to remain, sir, your obedient servant,

GEO. ABERNETHY,
Governor of Oregon Territory.

To his Excellency JAMES K. POLK,
President of the United States.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

GENTLEMEN: It is made my duty to forward to your honorable body the memorial passed by the legislature of Oregon, and the papers containing the documents referred to in the memorial, all of which is enclosed herewith.

I have the honor to remain, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

GEO. ABERNETHY,
Governor of Oregon Territory.

OREGON CITY, *December* 29, 1847.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled:

Your memorialists, the legislative assembly of Oregon territory, would respectfully beg leave once more to lay before your honorable body a brief statement of their situation and wants.

Having called upon the government of the United States so often in vain, we have almost despaired of receiving its protection, yet we trust that our present situation, when fully laid before you, will at once satisfy your honorable body of the great necessity of extending the strong arm of guardianship and protection over this remote but beautiful and valuable portion of the United States dominion.

Our relations with the proud and powerful tribes of Indians residing east of the Cascade mountains, hitherto uniformly amicable and pacific, have recently assumed quite a different character; they have shouted the war-whoop and crimsoned their tomahawks in the blood of our citizens. The Kayuse tribe, after committing numerous outrages and robberies upon the late emigrants, have, without the semblance of provocation or excuse, murdered eleven American citizens; among the number were Doctor Marcus Whitman and his amiable wife, members of the American board of foreign missions.

Called upon to resent this outrage, we feel sensibly our weakness and inability to enter into a war with powerful tribes of Indians. Such outrages, however, cannot be suffered to pass unpunished; it will only be the commencement of further and more extensive

murders; and our hitherto peaceful settlements will become the scene of fierce and violent warfare. We do not doubt the readiness of the people of this country to defend their lives and property, and to submit to all the privations incident to a state of war in a new and remote settlement like this.

Circumstances warrant your memorialists in believing that many of the powerful tribes, inhabiting the upper valley of the Columbia, have formed an alliance for the purpose of carrying on hostilities against our settlements.

The number of the white population of Oregon is alarmingly insignificant compared with the swarms of Indians which throng its valleys. To repel the attack of so formidable a foe, and protect our families and property from violence and rapine, will require, we fear, more strength than we possess. We are deficient in many of the grand essentials of war, such as men, arms and treasure; for them our sole reliance is on the government of the United States; we have the right to expect your aid, and you are in justice bound to extend it. For although we are separated from our native land by a range of mountains whose lofty altitudes are mantled in eternal snow; although three thousand miles (nearly two-thirds of which is a howling wild) lie between us and the federal capital, yet our hearts are unalienated from the land of our birth; our love for the free and noble institutions under which it was our fortune to be borne and nurtured remains unabated. In short, we are *Americans* still, residing in a country over which the government of the United States have the sole and acknowledged right of sovereignty; and, under such circumstances, we have the right to claim the benefit of its laws and protection.

Your memorialists would avail themselves of this opportunity to invite your attention to other subjects of deep and vital interest to the citizens of this territory. The nature of our compact, formed between the citizens of a republic and the subjects and official representatives of a monarchy, is such that the ties of political union could not be drawn so closely as to produce that stability and strength sufficient to form an efficient government. This union between the democrats of a republic and wealthy aristocratic subjects of a monarchy, could not be formed without reserving to themselves the right of allegiance to their respective governments.

Political jealousy and strong party feeling have tended to thwart and render impotent the acts of a government, from its very nature, weak and inefficient. In establishing a regular form of government, and creating tribunals for the adjustment of the rights of individuals and the prevention and punishment of crime, a debt has accumulated, which, though an insignificant amount, your memorialists can devise no means of liquidating. The revenue laws, from not being properly executed, while they are burdensome to classes of our citizens and sections of country, are wholly disregarded by others; and whole counties, which, for numerical strength, are equal to any in the territory, and fully participating in all the advantages of our com-

pact, have never contributed any assistance in bearing the common burden.

To coerce obedience to our temporary government would at once destroy the great object which called it into existence, the peace and harmony of our country. Anxiously looking forward to that happy period when we should again be under the protection of our revered and parent republic, we have rather endeavored to maintain peace by forbearance, than to command obedience by force, hoping that the dangers and difficulties to be apprehended from domestic discord, and from the savages around us, would be postponed until we became an acknowledged people, and under the protection of our mother country.

The action of your honorable body, in regard to the lands in Oregon, would seem to justify the expectation that liberal grants would be made to our citizens; yet the uncertainty of our title, and the uneasiness which is felt upon this subject, urges us to press it upon your attention.

Our citizens, before leaving their homes in the United States for Oregon, have had the strongest inducements held out by Congress to settle in this country, and their just expectations will not be met short of a liberal donation of land.

On the subject of filling the offices that will be created in the event of the extension of the jurisdiction of the United States over this territory, your memorialists would respectfully represent, that, as the pioneers of the American population in this country, the present citizens of Oregon have strong claims upon the patronage of the general government, and that it would be gratifying to have them filled by our fellow citizens; but, as few of an equally deserving number can enjoy this mark of approbation of our parent republic, and in view of our peculiar and difficult situation, it is the opinion of your memorialists, that it will be better for the future prosperity of our country, and that the great masses of the people will concur with them, in requesting that important and responsible offices created here, such as the office of governor and the several judgeships, should be filled with men of the best talent and most approved integrity, without regard to their present location.

If it be at all the intention of our honored parent to spread her guardian wing over her sons and daughters in Oregon, she surely will not refuse to do it now, when they are struggling with all the ills of a weak and temporary government, and when perils are daily thickening around them and preparing to burst upon their heads.

When the ensuing summer's sun shall have dispelled the snow from the mountains, we shall look, with glowing hope and restless anxiety, for the coming of your laws and your arms.

The accompanying documents will afford additional information concerning some of the subjects of which we have spoken.

To insure the speedy conveyance of these papers to the federal government, your memorialists have elected Joseph L. Meek, esq., a special messenger to the same, and respectfully ask your honor-

able body to make him such compensation therefor as you may deem right. And your memorialists will ever pray, &c.

ROBERT NEWELL,
Speaker.

Attest: CALVIN W. COOKE, *Clerk.*

Extract from the governor's message to the legislative assembly of Oregon, December 7, 1847.

Contrary to the expectation of all who reside in this territory, you are again convened under the provisional government of Oregon.

After learning that the boundary line question was settled, there was hardly a doubt resting in the mind of any individual with regard to the extension of the jurisdiction of the United States over this territory. We have been sadly disappointed, and hope, which was so fondly cherished, begins to sink into despair in the hearts of many.

Our situation is not a very pleasant one, on account of the uncertainty attending it. We may be, in less than six months, under the laws and government of the United States; and we may, on the other hand, exist in our present state for several years. This uncertainty will no doubt embarrass you in your proceedings.

If we remain as we are for any length of time, ways and means must be devised for raising a more extensive revenue. The laws should be published in a convenient form; a fund set apart for treating with Indians; and many other things provided for that we have thus far dispensed with, but which must be attended to, in order that we may carry out the principles under which we have associated.

This being the first session of the present Congress, they will have more time to devote to the formation of a government for this territory than at the last session. The probability is that peace between the United States and Mexico will have been restored, and relieve Congress from the cares and anxieties attendant upon a war, and also relieve the government from the very heavy expense which must necessarily attend the carrying on of a war. These things lead to the hope that among the first acts of Congress will be the passage of an act to establish a territorial government in Oregon. This will release us from our present embarrassments, and place us under a permanent form of government. Hoping that this may be the case, I will call your attention to such subjects as are most pressing in their character, and which cannot well be dispensed with.

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Our relation with the Indians becomes every year more embarrassing. They see the white man occupying their lands—rapidly filling up the country, and they put in a claim for pay. They have been told that a chief would come out from the United States and treat with them for their lands. They have been told this so often

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that they begin to doubt the truth of it. At all events, they say, "he will not come until we are all dead, and then what good will blankets do us? We want something now." This leads to trouble between the settler and the Indians about him. Some plan should be devised by which a fund can be raised, and presents made to the Indians of sufficient value to keep them quiet, until an agent arrives from the United States.

A number of robberies have been committed by the Indians in the upper country on the immigrants, as they were passing through their territory. This should not be allowed to pass. An appropriation should be made by you sufficient to enable the superintendent of Indian affairs to take a small party in the spring and demand restitution of the property, or its equivalent in horses. Without an appropriation a sufficient party could not be induced to go up there, as the trip is an expensive one.

The immigration the past season has been much larger than any preceeding one—amounting to between four and five thousand souls. They have all arrived in the settlements, unless there should be a few families still at the Dalls and Cascades, and scattered themselves over the territory. The majority of them are farmers and mechanics. They will add much to the future welfare and prosperity of Oregon.

During the past season we have been visited by a number of vessels; some of them drawing more water than the vessels that have usually visited us. I am happy to say they received full cargoes on board and crossed the bar in safety. The provisions of the pilot law have been carried out, and its good effects are already visible. The able pilot at the mouth of the river has made himself fully acquainted with the channel and currents, thus diminishing the dangers that formerly attended vessels coming to the river The time is not far distant when our river will be entered with more ease and facility than many of the ports in the United States on the Atlantic coast, and captains will wonder why the entrance was so much dreaded, forgetting that they are reaping the benefits of experience.

Proclamation by Geo. Abernethy, Governor of Oregon Territory.

In consequence of the low state of the finances of this country, and the general impression being that the Indians in the upper country were not united, a small force was thought sufficient to proceed to Walla Walla to punish the Cayuse Indians, and a proclamation was issued by me for one hundred men; since which, information has been received here which leads to the belief that the Indians have united, and the force ordered out in that case being insufficient, I therefore call on the citizens of this territory to furnish five hundred men, and appoint the following persons brevet captains, to enrol such citizens as may wish to enlist, viz:

Wesley Shannon, John Ford, Thomas McKay—Champoeg coun-

ty. John Owens, Wm. Williams, John Stewart—Polk county. Philip Thompson, George Nelson, Felix Scott—Yam Hill county. Isaac W. Smith, Benj. Q. Tucker—Tualatin county. James Officer —Clackamas county.

The enlistments to be for six months, unless sooner discharged by proclamation.

Each man will furnish his own horse, arms, clothing and blankets. The companies will bring all the ammunition, percussion caps, and camp equipage they can, for which they will receive a receipt from the commissary general.

Colonel Cornelius Gilliam will remain at Oregon city until the first companies arrive at Portland, when he will take command and proceed forthwith to Walla Walla.

Lieutenant Colonel James Waters will remain until the rear companies arrive at or near Portland, when he will take the command and proceed to Walla Walla.

Companies will rendevous at Portland, or opposite Portland, on or before the 8th day of January, 1848. Whenever a sufficient number of volunteers arrive on the ground at Portland, they will organize and proceed to elect their officers, viz: one captain, one first lieutenant, one second lieutenant, one orderly sergeant, and four duty sergeants.

Companies will consist of eighty-five men rank and file. If any company should be formed in the counties, smaller or larger, they will be regulated after they arrive on the ground.

As the commissary general will not be able to furnish a sufficient quantity of provisions for the army, the citizens of the territory are called on to deliver to his agents all the provisions they can, that the operations of the troops may not be impeded for want of provisions. Agents will be appointed by him at Salam, Yam Hill Ferry, Champoeg, Bute, and Portland.

In witness whereof, I have signed my name and affix-
[L. S.] ed the seal of the territory at Oregon city, this 25th day of December, 1847.

GEO. ABERNETHY.

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